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Public cameras accost privacy

By Adam Goodheart

- I. (1) Summer tourists visiting Washington might notice something a bit unusual about some of the capital's famous monuments: The white marble structures along the Mall have sprouted electronic eyes. (2) From the gleaming cornice of the Lincoln Memorial, for example, video cameras now loom over its famous steps.
- II. (3) The cameras are part of a high-tech surveillance network. (4) Local and federal police have been quietly developing it in the capital over the past few months. (5) Hundreds of video cameras trained at schools, monuments, parks and ordinary street corners are deployed by the network. (6) In Los Angeles, a similar network has been built. (7) Washington D.C.'s full network was put to use during the July 4th celebration; most of it, police promised, was shut off afterward, at least temporarily. (8) At a command center that day, cops watched a wall of monitors, which they plan to expand to include live images from security cameras in stores and subway stations.
- III. (9) As the federal government encourages municipalities across America to take responsibility for their own protection, security cameras are among the most popular options under consideration by many mayors and police chiefs. (10) This month, for example, officials in Virginia Beach, Va., unveiled a system of video cameras put in over popular pedestrian areas and equipped with face-recognition technology.

Independence vs. surveillance

- IV. (11) It is ironic that the latest ramping up of video surveillance in Washington coincided with the celebration of national independence. (12) Before such curtailments of privacy are accepted by Americans as a necessary cost of the war on terrorism, they should consider the threat this trend poses to our freedoms. (13) They also should take a close look at evidence that suggests more surveillance cameras are unlikely to make our country more safe.
- V. (14) First, the privacy concerns. (15) Police are required to obtain warrants to conduct searches or to tape citizens' conversations. (16) But such protections have not been extended by the courts to cover video surveillance. (17) Additionally, some of the cameras are so advanced that they can even record video at night.
- VI. (18) "Police need a surveillance warrant to engage in any form of audio taping," says Marc Rotenberg, executive director of the Washington-based Electronic Privacy Information Center. (19) "But they're doing video recording with no power whatsoever. (20) And video cameras are, if anything, even more intrusive."
- VII. (21) Rep. Connie Morella, R-Md., whose House subcommittee held hearings in March on the Washington camera network, discovered that there are no standards on where cameras can be installed, who is allowed to view the tapes and how long they are kept on file.
- VIII. (22) "Security is of critical importance," she says. (23) "But let's please establish some standards and guidelines. (24) There's something wrong about a situation where you can be walking down the street ... and there's a camera there and you don't know it."
- IX. (25) Freedom of Information Act requests, Rotenberg says, have revealed that federal authorities have used video cameras for surveillance of political demonstrations, a fact District of Columbia police officials have acknowledged.

Eyes on protesters

- X. (26) Consider those cameras on the facade of the Lincoln Memorial. (27) Then consider the political demonstrations that have taken place on the monument's steps. (28) Would the 1963 March on Washington, or the Vietnam War protests, or even recent rallies against abortion or for gay rights, have been as free and unfettered if they had been there then?
- XI. (29) The First Amendment right to assembly becomes a mockery if any public gathering can come under the hidden eye of authorities.
- XII. (30) Secondly, there are more problems with the cameras. (31) Take Great Britain, one of several nations that already have extensive visual monitoring systems. (32) Great Britain has installed more than 1.5 million video cameras in public places in response to domestic attacks by IRA terrorists as well as increasing concerns about violent crime. (33) According to one estimate, the average Londoner is now photographed some 300 times in the course of a typical day.
- XIII. (34) Yet the cameras have proven to be ineffective weapons against even relatively minor problems: Britain's rate of street crime continues to rise steadily. (35) However, some say that this may be connected to the fact that no one is allowed to carry a gun in Great Britain. (36) There's no known instance, according to the American Civil Liberties Union, of a video camera thwarting or deterring a terrorist attack.
- XIV. (37) Many Britons have begun to complain of a growing sense of uneasiness under the watchful eye of an electronic Big Brother. (38) Their concerns are understandable. (39) Experience shows that any video surveillance system is only as good — and only as incorruptible — as the people who are in control of the cameras.
- XV. (40) Our government undoubtedly needs to step up its vigilance against potential terrorism. (41) Yet if the events of recent times have taught us anything, it's that most terrorist strikes unfold almost invisibly until it is too late.

Cameras would be ineffective

- XVI. (42) Last month, a Palestinian boarded a bus in Israel as a police surveillance helicopter hovered directly overhead. (43) He had bombs hidden under his clothing. (44) As the officers watched from above, he blew himself up and killed 19 people.
- XVII. (45) Similarly, it is unlikely that surveillance cameras could have averted the July 4 shooting at Los Angeles International Airport. (46) Two handguns and a knife hidden from view were carried by the suspect, who killed two people. (47) A van filled with explosives or a bomb hidden in a shoe of an airline passenger also would be perfectly invisible to a camera.
- XVIII. (48) For politicians and police as well as for the public, it's tempting to look for easy, high-tech solutions to protect us from terrorists. (49) The government may even use sound recording devices to help monitor the public. (50) Training cameras on our country's own citizens, however, may fail to deter any attacks, breed fear rather than dispel it and undermine the very freedoms Americans are fighting to defend.

Independent Reading Questions

1. (Paragraph I) What will tourists notice is different about Washington D.C.?
2. (Paragraph II) How are the cameras used in Washington D.C.?
3. (Paragraph III) Why are the cameras being installed in Washington, as well as other places?
4. (Paragraph IV) What two reasons does the author give regarding why citizens should be worried about the cameras?
5. (Paragraph VI) Why is Marc Rotenberg so worried about the cameras?
6. (Paragraph XI) How might the cameras affect protesters?
7. (Paragraph XIII) According to the article, have the cameras worked in Great Britain? Why or why not?
8. (Paragraph XVI & XVII) According to these paragraphs, have surveillance cameras been effective?

Writing Strategies 1.1 Questions:

1. Which sentence is not related to the main idea of Paragraph II? Please briefly explain your answer.
2. Which of the following sentences would best begin Paragraph III?
 - a. *People are scared throughout the nation.*
 - b. *What's going on in Washington is part of a nationwide move toward video surveillance as a response to post-Sept. 11 concerns about terrorism.*
 - c. *Mayors and police chiefs across the nation have been searching for a way to prevent terrorist attacks like those that occurred on September 11, 2001.*
 - d. *Washington is just one of many cities to consider cameras as a way to enhance public safety.*
3. What would be an effective replacement for the underlined word in sentence 8 so as to maintain the tone of the piece?
4. Which sentence does not match the purpose of Paragraph V? Please provide a brief explanation for your answer.
5. Write a sentence to replace sentence 30 so as to provide a better opening to the paragraph.
6. Which sentence is not related to the main idea of the Paragraph XIII? Please provide a brief explanation for your answer.
7. Which sentence is not related to the main idea of the Paragraph XVII? Please provide a brief explanation for your answer.
8. Which sentence does not match the purpose of the Paragraph XVIII? Please provide a brief explanation for your answer.

Writing Strategies 1.2 Questions:

1. Rewrite sentences 3 and 4, combining them.
2. Sentence 5 is currently written in the passive voice. Rewrite sentence 5 so that it is in the active voice.
3. Sentence 9 is currently written in the passive voice. Rewrite sentence 9 so as to state the action in the most effective manner.
4. Which of the following words, if used to replace the underlined word in sentence 10, would provide a more accurate meaning?
5. Which of the following words, if used to replace the underlined word in sentence 19, would provide a more accurate/precise meaning?
6. Rewrite sentences 38 and 39, combining them.
7. Rewrite sentences 42 and 43, combining them.
8. Rewrite sentence 46 in the active voice.